Biggs Rapids/Sam Hill Memorial Bridge, spanning the Columbia at Maryhill, opens on November 1, 1962.

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On November 1, 1962, the Biggs Rapids/Sam Hill Memorial Bridge carrying U.S. 97 over the Columbia River at Maryhill, opens to traffic. The bridge replaces a ferry that had run between Biggs Rapids, just south of Goldendale, and Biggs Junction, Oregon, since the early 1920s. The Sam Hill Memorial Bridge is one of 25 highway bridges (excluding railway bridges and an old footbridge) that today (2006) cross the Columbia.

The bridge includes a fixed, single-span through truss. (A through truss is braced both above the traffic and below the deck.) It is a two-lane highway bridge, 26 feet wide and 2,567 feet long. The vertical clearance for river traffic is 75 feet. The construction firm, Paul Jarvis Inc. of Seattle, built the bridge in two years. It was financed with $3.2 million in bonds.

On opening day, Washington Governor Al Rosellini (1910-2011), Oregon Governor Mark Hatfield (1922-2011), and highway officials from both states cut the ribbon on the Oregon side and then had lunch at the Maryhill Museum. The bridge is named in honor of the good roads advocate and founder of Maryhill, Sam Hill (1857-1931).

In 2006, plans are being carried out to replace the existing deck (made of lightweight concrete covered with asphalt) with a new concrete deck on this heavily used truck route. The cost is to be shared by Washington and Oregon, and the work will be completed in 2007.

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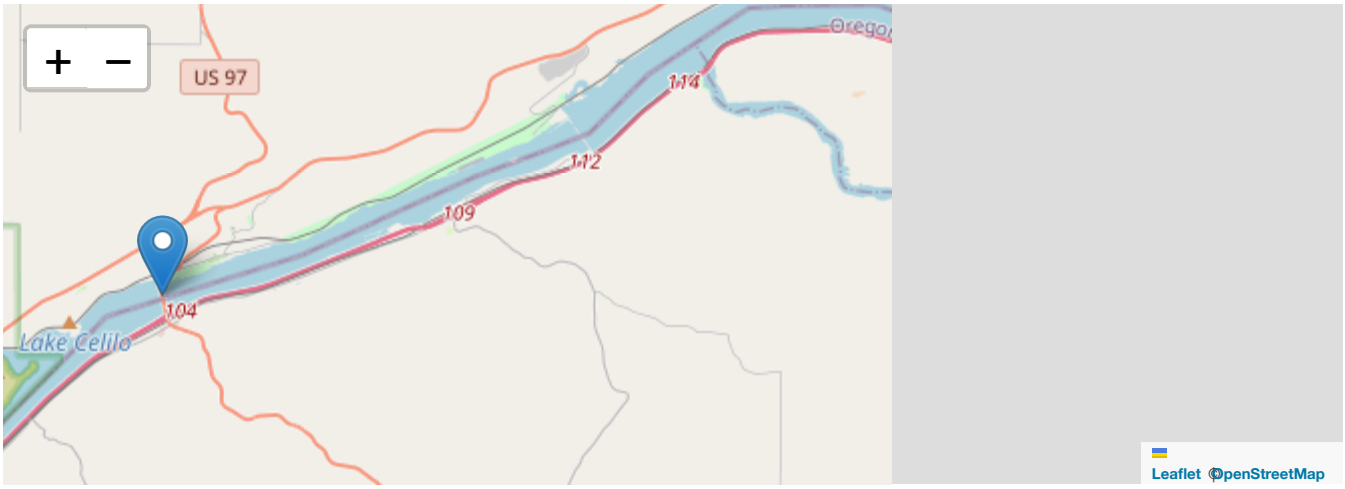

Biggs Rapids/Sam Hill Memorial Bridge, Maryhill, September 26, 2004

Photo by Lyn Topinka

Biggs Rapids/Sam Hill Memorial Bridge, Maryhill, July 5, 2003

Photo by Lyn Topinka

Maryhill Ferry, Columbia River, 1950s

Postcard

Sources: Craig Holstine and Richard Hobbs, *Spanning Washington: Historic Highway Bridges of the Evergreen State* (Pullman: WSU Press, 2005), 107-108; "US 97 - Biggs Rapids - Sam Hill Bridge Deck Replacement," WSDOT website accessed June 11, 2006 (http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/US97/BiggsBridge/).
Note: This essay was updated on August 14, 2011.

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